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dissenting church, in accepting from an *extern* hand, that allowance for the *doubled*, or *trebled* price of every article of consumption, which they *ought* to have received from their respective congregations.

SIMPLEX.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE REGIUM DONUM IN ENGLAND.

I LATELY met with the following account of the Regium Donum in England, extracted from the London magazine of 1774, written, it is alleged by Dr. Mayo, an acquaintance of the late Dr. Johnson, of whom mention is made in Boswell's life of that author.

Lord Castlereagh has proved himself the worthy successor to the principles and practices of Sir Robert Walpole. Both set up on whig principles, but having mounted the ladder, their schemes centered in practical toryism. It is curious to observe so great a coincidence of language and conduct between the donors and acceptors in 1723, and those in the present day. May we not now say that the fears expressed by Dr. Mayo, as to the effects of the Regium Donum on the independence of the dissenting clergy have been since in many instances verified?

"The origin of the Regium Donum was in April, 1723.—Fatal æra! for then protestant dissenting ministers first became state pensioners, and ministerial tools. At that time the dissenters expected, what for years before they had justly merited of the Brunswick line,—a complete restoration of all their natural rights and religious privileges. They had often reason to complain of bishops and statesmen, in former reigns; but, under George the wise and

steady, they depended on obtaining the repeal of every statute, which infringed the right of private judgement, violated the liberty of conscience, and made odious distinctions between one good subject and another.

"Sir Robert Walpole was then chancellor of the exchequer, a statesman, who knew too well, for the real interests of his country, the passions which are most apt to be predominant in the heart, and whom no man ever equalled in the application of gold. By this he daily converted his enemies into friends, and so charmed even the flaming votaries of liberty, dissenting ministers not excepted, as to reconcile them to corruption, and even to court fitters, and rejoice in them. He had observed, from year to year, the wonderful effects, which the smiles of the treasury-bench had on all ranks of men; and finding that the protestant dissenters, after being many years trifled with, were moving in earnest to obtain deliverance from their bondage, he closeted a few of their ministers whom he thought to have the most influence among their brethren, and who would best answer his purposes. In their presence, he wore the mask of friendship, and sanctity—he complimented them on their great abilities—assured them he had the heartiest zeal for the protestant dissenters, and their interests—lamented the poverty and small incomes of many of their ministers through the kingdom, and that any laws should hang over their heads. The reverend gentlemen (like their successors of the present day) were soon overpowered with his condescension, eloquence and goodness. He then declared his readiness to serve them any way, even in parliament, for the repeal of the cruel statutes against them: but the present year, 1723, was a very impo-

per time—he, the greatest friend they had, would not advise them to apply that session; if they did, it would greatly injure, if not ruin the cause; but the postponing it would greatly promote its success in a future period. A respectful postponing of it was very likely to obtain its success; whereas, to bring it on, without any regard to circumstances, or contrary to the advice of the best judges, and their most able advocates, might be called rashness, and would do dishonour to the cause. The language of courtiers and their tools is the same from one generation to another.

"To enforce this reasoning, he drew 500*l.* out of the treasury, by a warrant payable to a surgeon, and which was paid by another agent into the hands of nine ministers.—The bait was, "Pray receive this for the use and comfort of the widows of dissenting ministers, till administration can more effectually serve your cause." But a strict charge was given with the money, that the matter should be kept very secret. Grateful Sir Robert! to conceal the virtues of his royal master, and not suffer his favourites so much as to speak of this considerable taste or royal bounty, which was also promised to be annual.

"Some few years after, for their good services to administration, and to enable them to do more, the sum was encreased and advanced to 850*l.* half yearly. This is the present value of the treasury warrant; but there are large fees and deductions."

"Notwithstanding the baneful tendency and effects of the *Regium Donum*, many dissenters have contended, that still it is of great benefit to the interest, as relieving many poor ministers, with their widows and children, repairing their places of worship, and upholding many antipedobaptist congregations in the

country which, without this *royal bounty*, would not exist. But these advocates should consider, that, as the money is not designed by the treasury, so it is not limited by the present almoners, to such uses. But if every farthing were thus applied, what are all its advantages when weighed against the *disgrace* it fixes upon the dissenters, as *pensioners and tools of every administration?*

"A few years past, a very respectable person, then in a high office, was much offended with his friend, a late eminent dissenting minister near London, for the complaints he made in behalf of his brethren, of the difficulties they laboured under in point of religious liberty; and retorted, "*it was well known they received a handsome sum of money from government to silence their complaints as well as their applications—therefore, they should either nobly throw up the grant, or remain in silence.*"

"The troubles and evils produced by the *Regium Donum* among the body of ministers themselves, are too well known. It hath been an Achæan's wedge in their camp. It hath furnished some with means to encourage separations, and support parties and divisions in city and country. It hath enabled former almoners to appear at public collections, charity-dinners, &c. &c. as very rich, or exceedingly generous, to the disparagement of their brethren. The poor country-ministers have esteemed them superlatively benevolent and godlike, believing their donations to be their own property; and have been led to lightly esteem and censure other London-ministers as covetous or hardhearted, because their benefactions were not equal to those of the *Regium Donum-men*. But the greatest evil is, it hath procured the almoners an influence and power both in city and country, that is dangerous

and may be *fatal to the cause at large.*

"The dissenting ministers, by their pusillanimous conduct respecting the Regium Donum, (which, with equal propriety, hath been otherwise stiled *husk-money*) seem not to have considered the axiom, that a tree which has but just taken root may be removed by a single hand; but let it alone, it will strike so deep, and grow so high, that thousands cannot root it up from its foundation. The head of a spring may be stopped with a very small dam, but when suffered to take its course, increasing to a large river, it fills the country, and an army of elephants cannot pass it. It is, therefore, high time for the London-ministers either to reprobate this connection with administration, or to prove to the treasury, that the gentlemen who receive the £1700 annually, without account, however reputable and worthy, as christians and ministers, are *not the representitives of the body*, in that or any other point."

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

SUPERSTITION EXTRAORDINARY.

IN 1651, Mr. John Dee, in a work published in London, defines "Perspective" to be "an Art Mathematical, which demonstrateth the nature and properties of all radiations, direct, broken, and reflected." And "glass," according to him, "is a general name, in catoptrike, for any thing from which a beam reboundeth." "Is it not greatly," he asks, "against the sovereignty of man's nature, to be overshot and abused with things (at hand) before his eyes? as with a peacock's tail, and a dove's neck: or a whole ore, in water holden, to seem broken: things far off to seem near, and near, to seem far off: small

things to seem great, and great to seem small. One man to seem an army. Or a man to be curstly afraid of his own shadow. Yea, so much, to fear, that if you being alone, near a certain glasse, and proffer with dagger or sword, to foyne at the glasse, you shall suddenly be moved to give back (in manner,) by reason of an image appearing in the air, between you and the glasse, with like hand, sword or dagger, and with like quickness foyning at your eye, likewise as you do at the glasse. Strange this is to hear off, but more marvailous to behold, than these my words can signifie. And neverthelesse by demonstration opticall, the order, and cause thereof, is certified: even so as the affect is consequent. Yea, thus much more dare I take upon me, toward the satisfying of the noble courage that longeth ardently for the wisdom of causes naturall: as to let him understand, that in London, he may with his own eyes, have proof of that, of which I have said herein. A gentleman, (which for his good service done to his country, is famous and honourable: and for skill in the mathematicall sciences, and languages, is the odde man of this land, &c.) even he is able: and, (I am sure,) will very willingly let the glasse and proof be seen: and so I (here) request him; for the increase of wisdome, in the honourable, and for the stopping of the mouths malicious: and repressing the arrogancy of the ignorant: ye may easily guess what I mean." These last words will be best explained by the author's long and querulous "Digression Apologetical." "And for these, and such like marvellous acts and feats, naturally, mathematically, and mechanically, wrought and contrived: ought any honest student,

* Sir W. P.